

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

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RICHARD L. STALDER, SECRETARY

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**Corrections Services to Receive 2005 Secretary of Defense
Employer Support Freedom Award**
Recognized for Outstanding Support of National Guard and Reserve

(Baton Rouge) Out of nearly 1500 nominations, the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), an agency of the Department of Defense, announced that the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections – Corrections Services is one of fifteen (15) recipients of the 2005 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. This award is given to outstanding employers in recognition of their exceptional support of their employees who voluntarily serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

With the leadership and support of Governor Kathleen Blanco, the Department began the Five Star Statement of Support process in May 2004 and completed requirements with a formal ceremony in November 2004. DOC was the first state agency in Louisiana to obtain Five Star status and the Department continues to show its support to our employees and their families when opportunities arise.

“This award reflects not only the hard work throughout the Department to meet and exceed requirements, but of the immense support and appreciation the Department has for those employees who voluntarily serve our country in the National Guard and Reserve,” explained Secretary Richard L. Stalder. “The Department is proud to represent Louisiana and to be an example to other state agencies and private employers in this arena.”

More than 115 DOC employees have been called to serve in the National Guard and Reserve since September 11th, 2001, with fifty (50) employees currently serving active duty

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assignments. This award truly honors each and every employee, especially Probation and Parole officer Kurt Comeaux, killed in the line of duty in Iraq in January 2005.

"Since I offered my support for the ESGR mission last May, the Department of Corrections has wholeheartedly embraced the concept and has done a tremendous job in its support of DOC employees who have been called up for active duty in the National Guard and Reserve," said Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco.

"I would like to congratulate Secretary Stalder and the entire Department for the fine example they are setting as both an employer and a state agency. The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest in a series of ESGR honors and to be recognized in the first year of participation is nothing short of spectacular. Of course, the real winners in this are the soldiers and their families who have peace of mind because of the programs and policies in place at the Department of Corrections," said Governor Blanco.

Other employers receiving the 2005 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award include Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Wachovia Corporation and Sears, Roebuck and Company. Awards will be presented during a patriotic ceremony on October 15th in Washington, D.C. with President George W. Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld expected to attend.

"The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections under the leadership of Secretary Stalder has gone above and beyond in support of its employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve," said Thomas Fierke, State Chair for the Louisiana Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (LAESGR). "The Department has set a high standard for all Louisiana's private and public employers and as the LAESGR State Chair, I congratulate Secretary Stalder and his people for having received this recognition."

The 2005 Freedom Award nomination pointed out many positives the Department was making in support of the Guard and Reserve, including:

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- Newly created Departmental policy clearly explaining benefits and other entitlements allowed to Guard and Reserve members
- Development of a computerized training program to ensure all administrative and supervisory employees learn the fundamentals of national and state laws (several other Louisiana employers are now using this program to train their employees)
- Rights of reemployment upon return from active duty and entitlement to any training or retraining an employee would have received had they been present on the job
- Ongoing personal contact with employees and their families while on active military duty
- Secretary Stalder and other employees personally spreading the message and mission of the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve on both the state and national levels

Captain Keith Turner of Dixon Correctional Institute nominated the Department for the award. Turner, a Sergeant First Class in the United States Army Reserve, was activated for seven months in 2004 and served stateside. His departure, like that of most of those called to active duty, created some tough situations for the Department. Other DOC employees stepped up, however, and took on more responsibility to ensure that the ultimate goal of public safety was carried out.

“It’s a real honor for me to nominate the Department because I don’t know of any employer who could have been more supportive of me when I served on active duty,” said Turner.

Employers of National Guard and Reserve members have become inextricably linked to a strong national defense. Therefore, ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Guard and Reserve members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from employees’ military commitment. Today, ESGR operates through a network of more than 4500 volunteers working under the auspices of the Department of Defense through 55 committees located in each state, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories and in Europe. LAESGR is one of those committees. For more information on the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), please visit www.esgr.org or call 1-800-336-4590.

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